



Democratic Process Yields Results in Romania

With USAID's help, community members initiated and conducted twenty-two public hearings to discuss the 2004 draft budget; over 1,000 citizens participated. Senior local government officials presented their plans for the next budget year and invited citizen suggestions and proposals on budget expenditures, as well as on selecting sources of revenue.

Participants in this active process received over 10,000 copies of the "Budget in Brief" brochures outlining for their city or town where money was planned to be spent and the sources of revenues that would fund this spending. 700 posters were posted in the communities and the local media was involved in advertising the public hearings.

Public officials agreed with many of the concerns articulated by citizens and later set aside funds for legal assistance and some of the infrastructure improvements that participants voiced as important needs. Nineteen mayors have reallocated funds to address citizen priorities which include additional funding for cultural activities, and the rehabilitation of a communal road.

"This is the first time we have held public hearings to hear citizen concerns about how money should be spent."

- Vice-Mayor Toma Constantin



Photo: GRASP/Kristina Creosteanu

A farmer from Sura Marei asks for funds from the local budget to provide security from thieves stealing his crops.

In Giurgiu, for example, a public hearing on the adopted budget was held on February 19, 2004. Forty kindergarten managers, school and high school principals, public institution chief accountants, representatives of the condominium associations, and other citizens participated. The main proposals made by citizens and included in the new budget included: rehabilitation of the sidewalk in the Petrom-Romtelecom area, the introduction of minibuses to replace large public transportation buses, and the creation of a mobile workshop to help the Owners' Associations fix pipes, roofs, facades, basements -- in fact, a completely new public service, invented and proposed by the citizens.

Success Story

